



The College of  
Physicians and Surgeons  
of Newfoundland and Labrador

## COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS FOR CLINIC-BASED PATIENT CARE (RE: COVID-19)

### Notice to College Members

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April 9, 2020

Thank you for your efforts in caring for patients and supporting your colleagues during this evolving public health emergency. The College recognizes the challenges of providing care in these circumstances, including balancing your commitment to patients as well as caring for yourself.

The College has received concerns from members of the public that some physicians have not been compliant with current recommendations for physical distancing, personal protective equipment, and infection control.

The actions of physicians are critical to the success of managing the current COVID-19 public health emergency. It is essential that all physicians implement infection control practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and pre-screen patients for symptoms.

#### **Virtual Care**

Where appropriate, physicians are encouraged to see patients by telephone or secure video link. The provincial telehealth program is accessible to physicians within both the Regional Health Authorities and community-based practices. Physicians can sign-up using the intake form (<https://www.nlchi.nl.ca/register/telehealth/>).

The [Standard of Practice on Telemedicine](#) outlines the College's expectations when providing virtual care.



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### **Screening for COVID-19**

If you see patients in person, you must actively screen them for COVID-19 symptoms before they visit your office. You should also encourage patients to use the province's self-assessment tool ([www.811healthline.ca/covid-19-self-assessment/](http://www.811healthline.ca/covid-19-self-assessment/)) prior to attending at your office.

If a patient meets the criteria for potential infection, you must redirect them in accordance with the latest guidance from the Medical Officer of Health and the Regional Health Authorities.

### **Physical Distancing**

Patients who attend at clinic offices must be managed in a way that physical distancing of 2 metres from other patients and staff is always maintained. Patients should not be crowded together in a waiting room. You will need to adapt your practice to reduce the public health risk. This may include asking patients to wait in their cars or another isolated waiting space until they are called into the examination room.

### **Infection Control and PPE**

Physicians must ensure that clinic offices and examination rooms are appropriately sanitized in accordance with best practices for infection control.

The guidelines for appropriate personal protective equipment are changing as the understanding of the virus and risks associated with it change. Community-based physicians should only conduct assessments of, or engage with, at-risk patients if they are able to take appropriate precautions in accordance with guidance from the Medical Officer of Health. The College encourages physicians working within a Regional Health Authority to adhere to established screening, triage, and infection prevention and control policies and procedures within health care facilities.

All College communication to its members will be by email.  
It is a professional obligation for College members to read all College communications.